



**VAJIRAM & RAVI**  
Institute for IAS Examination

# The Analyst

**CURRENT AFFAIRS Handout**

**13th March 2026**



# Why Innovation Matters for India?



**CONTEXT:** Driving India's 'RDI' story needs decisive private sector participation

## - Context: Innovation for Viksit Bharat -

Innovation is vital for India's transition to a knowledge economy.



Economic Growth



Global Competitiveness



Technological Sovereignty



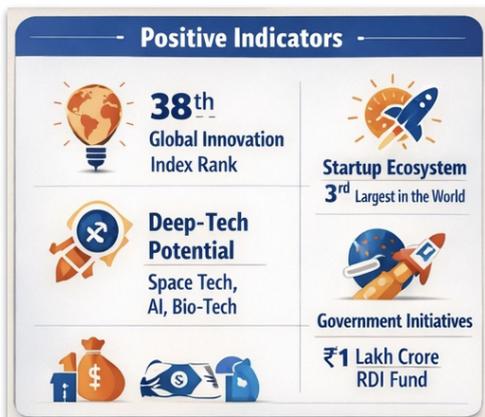
High-Skill Jobs

### Why Innovation?

- **Viksit Bharat 2047**
- It determines -
- Key Indicators -
- Striking 'Contradiction' in RDI
  - Strong government commitment ~
  - Weak core Innovation Outcomes
- Root Cause? - **EXECUTION & INDUSTRY ENGAGEMENT**

### Recent Government Initiatives: A Promising Push

- **Financial Support**
  - RDI Fund
  - Corpus - Deep-Tech Startups
  - Tax Incentives
  - Investment - Digital Infrastructure
- **Talent & Early Innovation**
  - Funding - Atal Tinkering Labs
- **Regulatory Reforms**
  - Startup Scheme
  - SHANTI Act, 2025



### THE PARADOX: High Intent vs Weak Fundamentals

- **Low R&D Intensity (Core Structural Weakness)** - ~0.64-0.65% of GDP on R&D
  - Low Investment limits cutting-edge research
- **Weak Private Sector Participation** ~41% of India's R&D spending
- **Domestic Patents vs Global Influence**
  - Global PCT Applications (2024) - Commercial Scalability?
- **Weak University-Industry Linkages**
  - India suffers from 3 Issues -
- **Human Capital Gaps in Innovation** -
  - Gender Diversity Challenge - Scheme - Uncertain!
- **Structural Weakness: Lack of Industrial Transformation**
  - Services led pattern
  - East Asian Economies ?
- **The Biggest Faultline: Weak Research-to-Market Link**
  - Research → Development → Commercialization → Scaling
  - Key missing elements ?
- **Other Hurdles** -
  - Bureaucratic Procedures, Weak Coordination
  - Social & Cultural Challenges

### Emerging Opportunities

- Space Sector Startups; Deep-Tech Innovation; Future Technologies



# Why Innovation Matters for India?



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According to GII 2025:

- Rank 95 in employment in knowledge-intensive sectors
- Rank 80 in number of researchers
- Rank 101 in employment of women with advanced degrees

## Way Forward



**Boost R&D Funding**  
2% of GDP Target



**Strengthen Industry Role**  
Public-Private Partnerships



**University-Industry Linkages**  
Tech Transfer, Incubation



**Develop Skilled Talent**  
STEM Education



**Support Deep-Tech Innovation**  
AI, Quantum, Semiconductors



**Enhance Innovation Financing**  
Venture & Risk Capital

*Bridging the Gap: From Startup Nation to Deep-Tech Power*

## Key Challenges



**Low Private R&D**  
41% of R&D by Industry  
(China: 77%, USA: 75%)



**Weak Human Capital**  
Poor Researcher Density  
Gender Gap in STEM



**Patent Gap**  
Low Global Patent Share  
(India: 4.5k vs China: 70k-)



**Lab-to-Market Disconnect**  
Limited University-Industry Linkages

## The Way Forward

- **'Substantially' Increase R&D Spending**
  - Corporate R&D Tax Incentives
- **Strengthen Private Sector Role**
  - PPP; Innovation-linked Procurement
- **Build Strong University-Industry Ecosystem**
  - 'Tech Transfer Offices'
  - Collaborative Labs
- **Deep-Tech Focus**
  - Radical Shift -
- **Human Capital Development**
  - Promote STEM
  - Women Participation
- **Strengthen Innovation Financing**
  - Patient Capital Funds
  - Risk-sharing Mechanisms
- **Create Innovation-Driven Industrial Policy**
  - Shift to Design & Manufacture

**"Startup Nation" → "Deep-Tech Innovation Power"**

## Mains Practise Question

*India's innovation challenge today is less about policy intent and more about structural and execution deficits. Discuss the factors responsible for India's underperformance in research, development, and innovation despite strong government initiatives. Suggest measures to strengthen industry-led innovation in the country.*

**(15 Marks, 250 words)**



# Women's Political Participation in India



**CONTEXT:** The gender disparity in Parliamentary representation remains wide

## A Democratic Paradox!

- Over the past six decades, women's participation in elections has transformed dramatically - **But there EXIST a PARADOX!** -

## Rise of Women as Voters

- Early Post-Independence Period: Large Gender Gap - 1967, 1971
- Reasons?
- Gradual Convergence Since the 1980s - GG - Narrowed
- 2009, 2014 -
- 2019, 2024 -

## State Elections: Women Overtaking Men

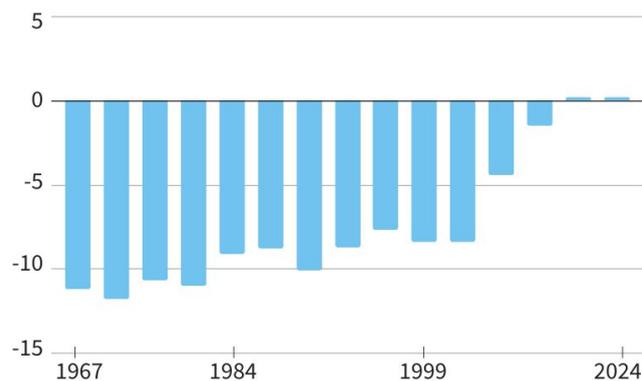
- Early 1990s
- 2005-07
- After 2011 - MORE than Men
- 2015-16
- 2020-25

## **Sustained mobilisation of Women Voters**

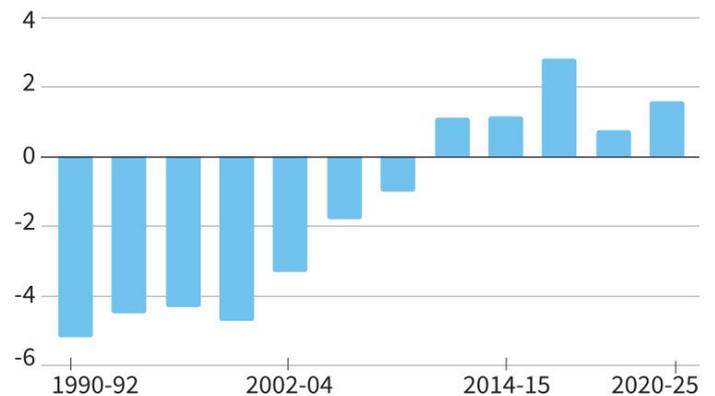
## Winds of **change**

The data for the charts were sourced from the Women and Politics study conducted by Lokniti-CSDS

**Chart 1:** The year-wise difference between male and female voter turnout between 1967 and 2024 Lok Sabha elections



**Chart 2:** Average gender gap in State Assembly elections between 1990 and 2025



## Participation Beyond Voting: Persistent Gender Gap

- Voting parity does NOT translate into equal political activity.

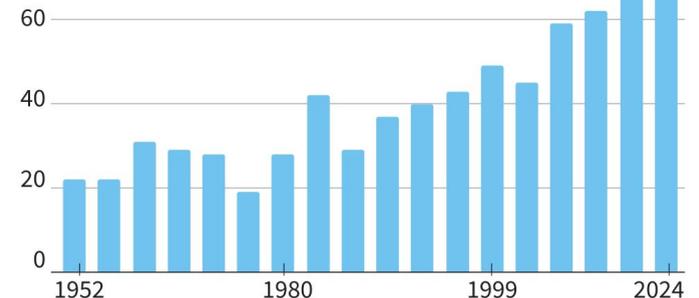
## Social Constraints on Political Participation

- A major barrier is lack of autonomy.

## Representation Gap in Parliament

- Despite voting parity, representation remains low.
- 1952: Only 22 women MPs; 1977: Fell to 19
- 2019: Record 78 MPs; 2024: Slight decline to 74
- ~ **14% of Lok Sabha**

**Chart 5:** Year-wise number of women MPs elected to the Lok Sabha



# Women's Political Participation in India



**CONTEXT:** The gender disparity in Parliamentary representation remains wide

**Table 3:** Gender-wise participation in political activities over the years

Campaign activity	2009		2014		2019		2024	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
Election meetings/rallies	9%	28%	15%	34%	14%	29%	16%	31%
Participation in processions	5%	20%	6%	15%	8%	14%	11%	18%
Participation in door to door canvassing	6%	17%	6%	14%	7%	13%	11%	19%

**Table 4:** The share of who said they needed permission to participate in select political activities (in %)

Activity	Need Permission Yes (%)
Attend a political rally	64
Attend a candidate meeting	62
Join a protest	63
Campaign for a candidate or party	61

## The Nomination Bottleneck

- Underrepresentation begins with candidate selection.
- 1957: 45 women candidates; 2024: 800 candidates

## Myth of "Low Electability"

- Political parties often argue women are less likely to win.
- Data contradicts this: 2024: Women 9% vs Men 6%

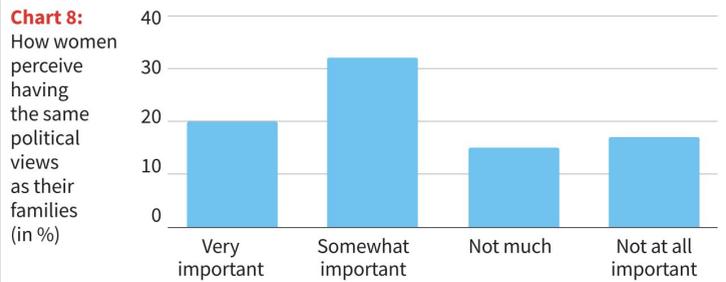
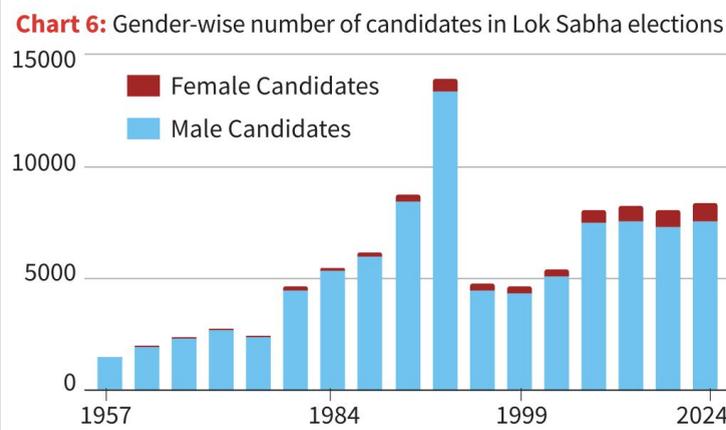
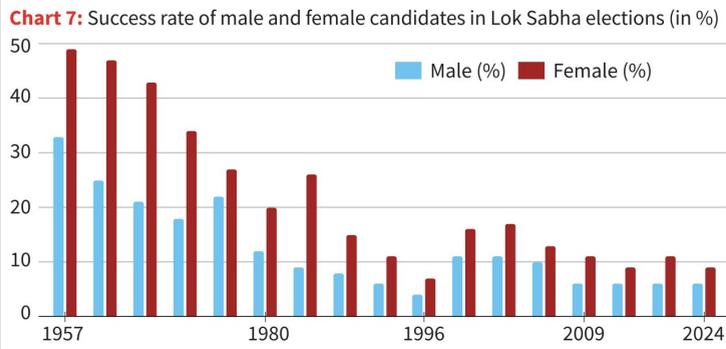
## Limited Political Autonomy

- Even voting decisions may not be fully independent.
- 52% consider it important to share political views with family



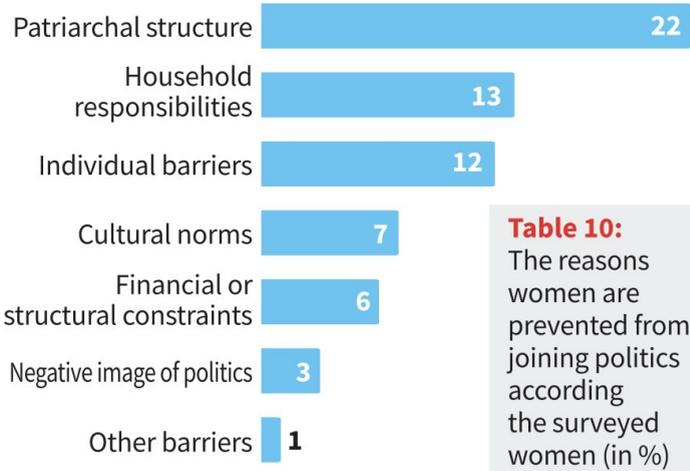
# Women's Political Participation in India

**CONTEXT:** The gender disparity in Parliamentary representation remains wide



## Way Forward: Women's Reservation

- Women's Reservation Bill
- Representation must translate into real decision-making power
- Social barriers must also be addressed



**Table 9:** The share of women who agree with the following statements about structural barriers (in %)

Statement	Agree (%)
Easier for woman with a political background to enter politics	58
Easier for woman from upper economic status to join politics compared to a woman from lower economic status	57
Parties routinely favour men over women, regardless of candidate merit	44
Voters are more likely to vote for men than women	44

## Structural Barriers to Political Entry

- Women perceive politics as unequal terrain.
- Institutional biases reinforce gender imbalance.

## Broader Social Challenges

- Women identify multiple barriers -
- Structural inequality extends beyond electoral processes.

## Mains Practise Question

*Despite achieving near parity in voter turnout, women in India remain underrepresented in legislative bodies. Examine the factors responsible for this gap between electoral participation and political representation. Suggest measures to enhance women's substantive political empowerment.*

**(10 Marks, 150 words)**



**SYLLABUS: PRELIMS:** International Organisations

**Newspaper :** The Hindu; **Page No :** 13

### Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)

#### Background and objectives:

The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) was established by an agreement concluded on 25 May 1981 in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia among Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and UAE in view of their special relations, geographic proximity, similar political systems based on Islamic beliefs, joint destiny and common objectives. Presently it encompasses a total area of 2,672,700 sq.km. The official language is Arabic.

2. The GCC Charter states that the basic objectives are to have coordination, integration and inter-connection between Member States in all fields, strengthening ties between their peoples, formulating similar regulations in various fields such as economy, finance, trade, customs, tourism, legislation, administration, as well as fostering scientific and technical progress in industry, mining, agriculture, water and animal resources, establishing scientific research centres, setting up joint ventures, and encouraging cooperation of the private sector.

3. The GCC members and Yemen are also members of the Greater Arab Free Trade Area (GAFTA). This is unlikely to affect the framework of the GCC in a major way as the GCC has a more prioritized timeframe as compared to GAFTA and it seeks greater integration. Recently, Morocco and Jordan have applied for the GCC membership which is currently being studied by the GCC Expert Committee.

4. GCC comprises of some of the fastest growing economies in the world, mainly due to an increase in oil and natural gas revenues coupled with a building and investment boom backed by reserves, etc. Most of these economies which were affected during recent economic downturn have now recovered and are growing at a fast pace again.

5. Organization Structure: The structure of the GCC consists of the Supreme Council, the Ministerial Council and the Secretariat General. The Secretariat is located in the city of Riyadh. The constitution of the GCC precisely reflected the importance of seeking ways to make the unity of Arab States a reality. The constitution required the organization to provide "the means for realizing coordination, integration and cooperation" in economic, social and cultural affairs.

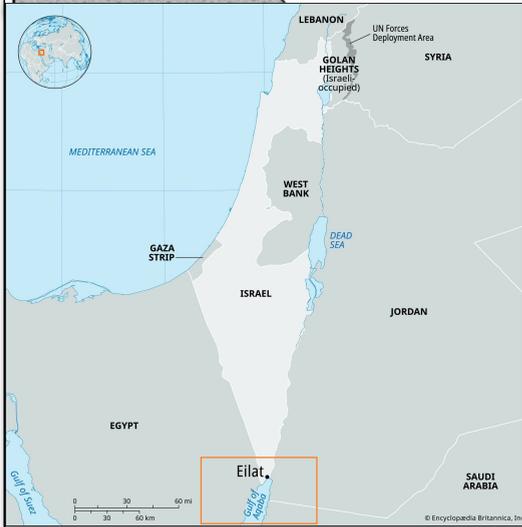
a) The Supreme Council (the highest authority of the GCC) comprises the Heads of State of the six member countries. The Supreme Council meets once a year in ordinary session. Emergency sessions can be convened at any time by the heads of any two Member States. The chairmanship of the Supreme Council is held by each Member State in turn. Resolutions are carried by majority vote. The Supreme Council is responsible for determining the overall policy of the GCC and for ratifying recommendations presented to it by the Ministerial Council or the Secretariat General.



# Straits in West Asia



**SYLLABUS: PRELIMS:** Places/Events of Importance  
**Newspaper :** The Hindu; **Page No :** 16



**SYLLABUS: PRELIMS:** Organisations  
**Newspaper :** The Hindu; **Page No :** 5

The Akshaya Patra Foundation is an independent charitable trust registered under the Indian Trusts Act 1882 (Reg. No. 154). We endeavour to implement the Government of India's PM POSHAN Initiative (formerly the Mid-Day Meal Scheme) to solve at scale the overarching societal issues of classroom hunger and malnutrition in the country.



## The Akshaya Patra Foundation

The Akshaya Patra Foundation is a not-for-profit organisation headquartered in Bengaluru, India. The Foundation strives to eliminate classroom hunger by implementing the PM POSHAN (Mid-Day Meal) Programme. It provides nutritious meals to children studying in government schools and government-aided schools. Akshaya Patra also aims to counter malnutrition and support the Right to Education of children hailing from socio-economically challenging backgrounds.

### Our Vision

No child in India shall be deprived of education because of hunger

### Our Mission

Serving 3 million children mid-day meals and 3 million children morning nutrition by 2030

[Read More](#)



Over 4 billion meals served



Over 2.33 million+ children benefitted



Reached to over 23,978 schools



16 States and 3 Union Territories



78 Locations  
47 kitchens are certified for ISO 22000:2018 (Food Safety Management System).

## Akshaya Patra Narrative

### Primary cause

#### 1 Food for education (primary cause)

- **Core Mid Day Meal program** including kitchen facilities (vehicles, salaries, trainings etc.)
- **Other supporting programs**
  - ICDS: Anganwadi feeding program (children in formative age group 3-6Y)
  - **Other meal programs:** Milk distribution (in association with Govt. of Karnataka), breakfast feeding
  - **Infrastructure:** Minimal upgrades supplementing core MDM program (seating areas with roof, infrastructure to serve (trolleys), utensils)



#### 2 Sustainability (ancillary cause)

- **Energy:** Shift to renewable sources of energy
- **Water:** Minimize non-cooking freshwater usage
- **Waste:** Effective waste management

#### 3 Education beyond MDM (ancillary cause)

- **Scholarship program:** Financial aid for government school children and MDM beneficiaries seeking higher education / specialized skills training



**SYLLABUS: GS 2 : Education**

**Newspaper : The Hindu; Page No : 8**

## About National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT)

- It is an **autonomous organisation set up in 1961** by the Government of India to assist and advise the Central and State Governments on policies and programmes for qualitative improvement in school education.
- The major objectives of NCERT and its constituent units are to:
  - Undertake, aid, promote and coordinate research in areas related to school education;
  - Prepare and publish model textbooks, supplementary material, newsletters, journals and other related literature;
  - Organise pre-service and in-service training of teachers;
  - Develop and disseminate innovative educational techniques and practices;
  - Collaborate and network with state educational departments, universities, NGOs and other educational institutions;
  - Act as a clearing house for ideas and information in matters related to school education;
  - Act as a nodal agency for achieving the goals of universalization of elementary education.
- NCERT is an implementation agency for bilateral cultural exchange programmes with other countries in the field of school education.
- The NCERT also interacts and works in collaboration with international organisations, visiting foreign delegations and offering various training facilities to educational personnel from developing countries.
- As per the National Education Policy 2020, NCERT is the nodal agency to develop National Curriculum Frameworks (NCFs) for (a) Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE), (b) School Education, and (c) Adult Education.
- The council headquarters is located at Sri Aurobindo Marg, New Delhi.
- Organizational Structure:
  - The Union Minister of Education is the President (ex-officio) of the General Body of NCERT.
  - The members of the General Body include Education Ministers of all States and Union Territories.
  - The Secretary, NCERT is the Convenor of the General Body of the NCERT.
  - The Executive Committee is the main governing body of NCERT. The Union Minister of Education is its President (ex-officio) and the Union Minister of State in the Ministry of Education is the ex-officio **Vice-President**.
  - The Executive Committee is assisted in its work by the various Standing Committees/Boards.
  - The functions of the Council are looked after by the Director, Joint Director and Secretary.



# Beirut & wider Levant



**SYLLABUS: PRELIMS:** Beirut & wider Levant  
**Newspaper :** The Hindu; **Page No :** 5



**Q1. Regarding the Gulf Cooperation Council, consider the following statements:**

1. All countries that share a coastline with the Persian Gulf are members of the GCC.
2. Yemen, despite being located entirely on the Arabian Peninsula, is not a member of the GCC.
3. The headquarters of the GCC is located in Manama, Bahrain.

**Which of the statements given above is/are correct?**

- a) 1 and 3 only
- b) 1 only
- c) 2 only
- d) 3 only

**Answer:** c

**Q2. With reference to the geography of the northern Red Sea, consider the following statements:**

1. The Gulf of Suez lies to the west of the Sinai Peninsula and is entirely bordered by Egypt.
2. The Gulf of Aqaba lies to the east of the Sinai Peninsula and provides Jordan with its only access to the sea.
3. The Suez Canal connects the Mediterranean Sea directly to the Gulf of Aqaba.

**Which of the statements given above are correct?**

- a) 1, 2 and 3
- b) 1 and 2 only
- c) 2 and 3 only
- d) 1 and 3 only

**Answer:** b

**Q3. Consider the following statements:**

**Statement I:** Atal Tinkering Labs under the Atal Innovation Mission are established exclusively in government and government-aided schools to bridge the digital divide.

**Statement II:** The Atal Innovation Mission provides a grant-in-aid of ₹20 Lakh to each approved school, which covers the initial establishment cost and operational expenses for 5 years.

**Which one of the following options is correct?**

- a) Statement I is correct, but Statement II is incorrect
- b) Both Statement I and Statement II are correct, and Statement II is the correct explanation for Statement I.
- c) Both Statement I and Statement II are correct, and Statement II is not the correct explanation for Statement I.
- d) Statement I is incorrect, but Statement II is correct.

**Answer:** d

**Q4. Regarding the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), consider the following statements:**

1. It is a statutory body established by a specific Act of Parliament in 1961 to regulate school education.
2. The Prime Minister of India serves as the ex officio President of the General Body of NCERT.
3. All Education Ministers of the States and Union Territories are ex officio members of its General Body.

**How many of the statements given above is/are correct?**

- a) Only One
- b) Only Two
- c) All Three
- d) None

**Answer:** a

**Q5. Consider the following pairs of Water Bodies in the Levant and the countries/territories that share a direct border with them:**

Water Body	Bordering Entities
1. Dead Sea	Israel, Jordan, and the West Bank
2. Sea of Galilee	Israel, Lebanon, and Syria
3. Gulf of Aqaba	Egypt, Israel, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia

**How many pairs given above is/are correctly matched?**

- a) Only One
- b) Only Two
- c) All three
- d) None

**Answer:** b





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